

FCC Commissioners
The Federal Communications Commission RE: Docket 04-435
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear FCC Commissioners ,

As a frequent airline traveller I am writing to voice my concerns about the FCC's proposal to relax the restrictions on the use of cell phones on airplanes in flight.

Use of cell phones on planes that have left the gate will interfere with the ability of flight crews to communicate with passengers during a flight.

As an example, I was recently on an American Airlines flight from Washington to Boston. While the flight was still on the ground, and had not left the gate (cell phone use was still allowed), a women sitting in the row in front of me was having a conversation on her phone -- she was not particularly loud, or in any way offensive. These particular AA planes are narrow - 3 seats across, and the crew frequently moves passengers to the rear of the plane for weight distribution purposes. In this case, the flight crew used the plane's announcement system to ask for 2 volunteers from rows 5 & 6 to move back and occupy seats that were then empty in rows 11 & 12. The lady on the cell phone was in row 12: her conversation, although conducted in a hushed tone, was distracting enough in those close quaters to make it impossible for the passengers sitting around her (rows 11-13) to hear the flight crew, and she was oblivious to the fact that the crew was trying to communicate with passengers in her row. People heard snippets and knew something was going on with row 11, or some thought it was 12. Somebody mis-heard that the row 12 passengers were supposed to move to the front of the plane. The passenger sitting next to the cell phone user tried to alert the woman on the cell phone to move, but it took a bit to get her to interrupt her conversation and focus on what was being said. The crew made the announcement a second time, two passengers (from rows 5 and 6) came back, and the folks in row 12 told the one trying to sit in the empty seat that they couldn't sit there, the row was being evacuated. This scenario all played it self out in a matter of minutes, and no harm was done. The flight crew (who were at the front of the plane and couldn't understand why nobody was sitting down) explained over the announcement system for a third time what they were trying to accomplish, and by the third time the cell phone user had hung up, and everybody understood.

At the time I thought to myself - please FCC, don't let people use these phones while the plane is in the air. If there had been a real emergency, this would have been a real problem. As a frequent travel and a frequent cell phone user I can say with absolute certainty that if you remove the ban I will use my

phone, perhaps a lot, when I fly. It would be handy, it would allow me to be productive, and I'm sure the time would pass more quickly. That being said, I'd rather be SAFE, then entertained or productive.

I understand that airplane safety is not the FCC's concern, and I that I should write to the FAA and ask them to keep the cell phone ban in place even if you remove the technical prohibition. But I do have to wonder why you are about to remove the prohibition at all? I'm sure the cell phone companies would love the extra usage revenue and that this proposal was started in some manner by them -- but absent a compelling showing that there is no imminent harm the desire by cell phone companies to enhance their revenue streams shouldn't be enough to warrant a rule change

To the best of my knowledge is no hard evidence that cell phone use doesn't interfere with navigational instruments - particularly if you envision the airwaves surrounding a plane with the signals from a couple of hundred cell phones at the same time. The introduction of cell phone use in the cabin will not only increase tension among passengers, it will compromise flight attendants' ability to maintain order in an emergency. Cell phone use could also enable terrorists to coordinate a plan of action more effectively.

Please leave the current rules in effect.

Sincerely,

Susan Gately
84 Littles Ave
Pembroke, Massachusetts 02359

cc:
Senator Edward Kennedy
Senator John Kerry
Representative Bill Delahunt